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The future of European Union in Frans Timmermans vision

Europe is now facing serious internal and international challenges. How will Europe manage immigration, social policies, and the relationship between Brussels and the member state governments? How will Europe act towards the Trump administration? How will it find a sustainable and safe relation with Putin's Russia? What position should be taken at the European level on US-China trade war? How should Europe manage the Iran dossier and nuclear weapons? Europe has in front of itself a two way path: a tighter and more integrated Europe or the risk of returning to national governance. Frans Timmermans, Vice President of the European Commission, brings to the Trento Economics Festival his huge and wide experience within European and international affairs, discussing together with Tonia Mastobuoni, editor and Berlin correspondent at La Repubblica, and Valentia Romei, editor at the Financial Times.

Frans Timmermans explains "The whole world is looking at us Europeans in order to understand how we will act towards the main challenges of international politics, we need a united Europe, at the same time respecting the results of each member state's elections". In his opinion stated that what happens in Italy may later be extended to other European countries, so the aftermath of the Italian elections should be taken seriously with a high level of debate both within European institutions and at member State level.

He continues by saying "Brexit itself should be interpreted as a early notice of a take-back-control tendency by European citizens". Timmermans admits and apologizes for "Treating Europeans more as consumers rather than as citizens and if we, as non-populists, are not able to keep people dreaming, it is better to surrender to the populists, but I strongly disagree with this option. The risk if we fail is that the populists would be able to make European people dream, but through nightmares". In Timmermans view, we as Europeans should not fear diversity, because it is from our diversity within Europe itself that we set up our creativity. "Losing our European creativity it means losing future economy opportunities".

Concerning growing euro-skepticism, Timmermans has clear ideas. "If you are playing soccer and you do not respect the referee's role, rules do not work. We risk to move from the Rule of Law to the Right of Power, and when the first – the one on which the EU is based – comes to an end, Europe itself is destined to vanish. I wish European citizens would understand how delicate this historical moment is . What is the solution?" Timmermans invoked Francois Mitterand when he said "We should re-invent a sort of European patriotism, because a patriot loves his country, while a nationalist hates other countries. We should imagine an Europe in which every citizen has his place and can share democracy". That is why Europe should act united against present day challenges, support international free trade without barriers, and should carry out sustainable, steady and safe relationship with Putin's Russia. Timmermans concluded by saying "If we as Europeans do not act no one else in the world will".

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